

Draft Glossary of Terms (last amended November 2000)

Acres, Gross

The total acreage of an area of land excluding required public right-of-ways and major power transmission easements.

Buffer/Greenbelt

An area of open space, very low-density residential, undeveloped, or agricultural land used to separate communities, villages, or developed areas, provide visual relief, provide compatible recreational opportunities, and/or protect natural resources, vegetation or wildlife corridors. Also refers to an area of land separating two distinct land uses that acts to soften or mitigate the effects of one land use on the other.

Built Environment

All elements (including streets, buildings, landscape, and transit systems) that, by definition, involve some application of human effort and technology toward their design, construction or manufacture.

Carrying Capacity

The potential of an area to support development. Refers to the natural limits of the land to accommodate development with consideration to the quality of air, water, land, or natural habitats. Also refers to the ability of an area to accommodate development with existing or planned provision of utilities, the natural environment, and the community goals as stated in the General Plan.

Character, Community

Special characteristics of an area that set it apart from its surroundings and contribute to its individuality. Community character is measured by a set of clearly identifiable characteristics which may include: common architectural styles, geographic setting (i.e. desert, mountain, coastal), bulk and scale of development, residential density, historical and cultural resources, established recreational uses, local industries or natural resources, and types and intensity of land use.

Clustering

A site design technique provided for in the Zoning Ordinance by which lots are grouped, reduced in size, or 'clustered', rather than distributed evenly throughout the project site, without increasing the overall density allowed by the General Plan or zoning.

Compatibility

The characteristics of different uses or activities which allow them to be located in close proximity in harmony and without ill effects. Compatibility is measured by degree of conflict using performance standards such as density, lot size, intensity of use, traffic impacts, environmental impacts, aesthetics, and noise.

Country Town

Existing, small historically established retail/residential areas serving low-density rural areas or functioning as resorts. They are designated for generally one dwelling unit per acre residential

densities or greater and are clearly removed geographically from existing or projected urban areas.

Density (Residential)

The number of permanent residential dwelling units per gross acre of land.

Development

A project involving property improvement and, usually, change of land use character. Development also refers to the act of using land for building or extractive purposes. Land development is undertaken to erect buildings or structures, to provide recreational facilities, establish agricultural uses, construct infrastructure and utilities, and to provide access to natural resources.

Dwelling Unit

A room or group of rooms (including sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation facilities, but not more than one kitchen), that constitutes an independent housekeeping unit, occupied or intended for occupancy by one household on a long-term basis.

Floodplain

The relatively flat area of low lands adjoining, and including, the channel of a river, stream, watercourse, bay, or other body of water which is subject to inundation by the flood waters of the 100-year frequency floods.

Floodplain Fringe

The area within the floodplain that is not in the floodway.

Floodway

The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to pass the 100-year flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than one foot. The floodway also includes all land necessary to convey a ten-year flood without structural improvements. No development is allowed in floodways.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

A method of calculating the building intensity allowed on a site. Floor Area Ratio is expressed as the gross floor area permitted on a site divided by the total net area of the site, expressed in decimals to one or two places. For example, on a site with 10,000 net sq. ft. of land area, a Floor Area Ratio of 1.0 will allow a maximum of 10,000 gross sq. ft. of building floor area to be built. On the same site, a FAR of 1.5 would allow 15,000 sq. ft. of floor area; a FAR of 2.0 would allow 20,000 sq. ft.; and a FAR of 0.5 would allow only 5,000 sq. ft.

Forest Conservation Initiative (FCI)

An initiative passed by the voters of San Diego County in 1993, remaining in effect until 2010. FCI generally affects private inholdings within the Cleveland National Forest, requiring a 40 acre minimum parcel size and a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 acres.

Level of Service (LOS) Standard

A quantitative standard used to measure the effectiveness of a public service, such as police, fire, or library, or the performance of a facility, such as a street or highway.

Public Park

Land that is publicly owned or controlled for the purpose of providing recreation or open space for public use.

Ridgeline

A line connecting the highest points along a ridge and separating drainage basins or small-scale drainage systems from one another.

Right-of-Way

A strip of land acquired by reservation, dedication, prescription or condemnation occupied or intended to be occupied by public (roads, sidewalks, water lines, sewers or other similar uses) or private interests (electric transmission lines and other utilities, oil or gas pipelines, railroads).

Rural Character

Rural character refers to the pattern of land use and development in areas of the county typified by certain basic elements which may include, but are not limited to:

- a) a predominance of open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation over the built environment;
- b) traditional land-based uses with an emphasis on agriculture and/or other locally unique land use characteristics;
- c) small, coherent communities typified by valued attributes such as: historical continuity; small, independent businesses; local availability of goods and services; large residential lots; dark skies; and equestrian activities.
- d) development compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and wildlife habitat;
- e) a limited expectation of urban infrastructure such as sewer, water, urban roads, curbs and sidewalks.

Specific Plan

A tool authorized by Government Code §65450 et seq. for the systematic implementation of the general plan for a defined portion of a community's planning area. A specific plan must specify in detail the land uses, public and private facilities needed to support the land uses, phasing of development, standards for the conservation, development, and use of natural resources, and a program of implementation measures, including financing measures.

Scenic Viewshed

A defined area which has been identified for its high scenic value.

Sphere of Influence

A plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency, as determined by the Local Agency Formation Commission of the County. A city's sphere of influence defines the primary area within which urban development may be expected and any annexation of unincorporated land must first be within the sphere of influence before annexation may proceed.

Village

Existing, small, historically established retail/residential areas serving surrounding low/moderate density rural areas or functioning as resorts.

Williamson Act

Formally known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, it is the state's principal policy for the preservation of agricultural and open-space land. It is a voluntary, locally administered program that provides a mechanism for local governments to protect farmland and open space in cooperation with owners of the land. Landowners enroll parcels under minimum 10-year contracts with local governments to restrict lands to agriculture and compatible open-space uses (as of 1999, pursuant to Section 51296 of the State Code, property owners may rescind their 10-year contracts and enter into 20-year (Farmland Security Zones) contracts). In return, land is assessed for property taxes at a rate consistent with its actual use, rather than potential market value. The land is then subject to certain enforceable restrictions, and certain conditions need to be met prior to approval of an agreement.